

Sermon for the 10th Sunday after Pentecost
Trinity Church, July 20, 2008
Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Human life is a confusing business at best, and the more one sees of it the more baffling it becomes. Relationships are often ambivalent and motives are contradictory. Truth is smothered in the avalanche of information. The differences between good and evil, right and wrong, are not always self evident. That isn't a complaint. It's a plain observation. The ambiguities of life are simply the product of our complicated human nature. Robert Bolt wrote the play, *A Man for All Seasons*. The play is about Sir Thomas More, the 16th century English philosopher-statesman and Christian martyr. In the play, Bolt has his main character say, "God made the angels to show him splendor -- as he made animals for innocence and plants for their simplicity. But Man he made to serve him wittily, in the tangle of his mind.

The "tangle of his mind": The tangled human mind longs for clarity and simplicity. That's the appeal of cowboy movies and their metaphors: the heroes wear white hats, the bad guys, black. Good triumphs, visibly and dramatically. That's melodrama. We can cheer the hero and hiss the villain. But that's not how real life works.

Jesus' first disciples weren't very much different from us. They wanted answers. They wanted clarity. And Jesus gave them a parable. It wasn't what they wanted. Instead of clarity, instead of simplicity, Jesus gave them a puzzle.

It's about good and evil in the world, and about the difficulty involved in distinguishing between the two. And it was also a warning about jumping to hasty conclusions.